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ABSTRACT

The Tennessee Technological University Rural Education Research and Service Consortium (RERSC) was founded in 1984 to facilitate research and service activities of the College of Education faculty in selected rural schools, provide assistance to faculty desiring to engage in such research/service, and launch a major research thrust consistent with provision of the Comprehensive Education Reform Act of 1984 and the national emphasis on effective schools and teaching. During its second year, project goals were redefined to emphasize studies of rural school effectiveness, enhancement of teacher effectiveness, school improvement service projects, university faculty development, rural education research, and rural school advocacy. Demand for services and opportunities for research have exceeded available financial and faculty resources. During 1985-86, RERSC expanded membership to 5 more schools; established a governance board; collected data from 39 schools for the 100 Rural School Study; sponsored monthly forums; initiated 21 faculty projects in member schools; provided a course in "Improvement of Teaching Through Peer Coaching"; sponsored faculty workshops on school-based research design, ethnographic techniques in education research, and rural education research issues; and facilitated rural field experiences for pre- and inservice educators. The annual report lists authors and titles of 19 faculty research/service projects and 28 research presentations/publications. (NEC)

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TENNESSEE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

RURAL EDUCATION RESEARCH AND SERVICE CONSORTIUM

ANNUAL REPORT

1985-86

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Rural Education Research and Service Consortium

Annual Report for 1985-86

Introduction

The Tennessee Technological University (TTU) Rural Education Research and Service Consortium (RERSC) was established in 1984 to facilitate research and service activities of the TTU College of Education faculty in selected rural schools. RERSC seeks to provide assistance to faculty desiring to engage in rural education research and service. This major research thrust is consistent with the provisions of the Comprehensive Education Reform Act of 1984 (CERA) and the national emphasis on effective schools and effective teaching. Project activities are funded by the College of Education and the College of Education Foundation.

Status of the Rural Education Project

The original proposal for the Rural Education Project included seven goals. They are itemized below with a brief synopsis of activities and outcomes related to each goal.

1. Provide an organizational structure to facilitate and promote cooperative efforts among the constitutent members. The original members of the consortium were three schools in Jackson County, three schools in White County, York Institute at Jamestown, the Tennessee Department of Education Upper Cumberland District Office, and the TTU College of Education. Membership has now expanded to include four additional schools in White County and one additional school in Jackson County. A governance board consisting of representatives from each member institution and the school systems involved was established. The board has met four times to provide direction to the project and formally approve school based projects. At this point, formal meetings of the board are less necessary because of the increased level of informal communication between the project director and the school officials. Most of the original skepticism of the school administrators concerning the intent of the program has been allieviated allowing greater freedom of access and interaction. Additional schools and school systems have expressed interest in membership in the Consortium.

2. Encourage research related to rural education and other rural issues. The major formal research initiative is the 100 Rural Schools Study being directed by Dr. Gene Talbert. Permission was received from Kappa Delta Pi to use the instrumentation and procedure from their 100 Good Schools study. Data from 39 schools have been collected and added to the rural schools data base stored in the VAX. Preliminary analyses have shown the rural schools of the Upper Cumberland to share many of the characteristics of the national sample of effective schools. However, statistically significant differences exist in the areas of teaching critical thinking, availability of instructional

resources, teacher input into decision making, and parental involvement in the educational process. These findings are not surprising but underscore a need for educators and decision makers to analyze current practice and seek ways of upgrading these areas that are compatible with the cultural structure of the rural school and community.

In addition to the Good Schools data, achievement scores are being collected in many of the rural schools and their effectiveness determined using the Ronald Edmonds definition of an effective school. According to Edmonds, an effective school is equally as successful in bringing lower socio-economic students to minimal mastery in basic skills as with more affluent students. Preliminary findings indicate that rural schools are highly effective (85-92%) in basic skills mastery by poor students. These findings may indicate that the rural poor child does not differ as much from his peers as does the urban poor child. It may be that the Edmonds definition does not adequately discriminate between effective and ineffective rural schools and that a different definition is needed. In those schools where the data are available, comparisons are being made of student achievement against other factors including attendance, place of residence, and family structure.

3. Provide a forum for sharing and disseminating information related to rural education and other rural issues. The major vehicle for the sharing of information is the TTU Community of Rural Scholars chaired by Dr. James Akenson. Consisting of interested teacher education faculty members and open to other faculty having rural research interests, the group meets monthly for a dutch treat luncheon, an update of the Rural Educatin Project, and one or more faculty presentations on research interests. Between meetings, various rural education publications and announcements are circulated by the project director.

The campus interest in rural education led to the co-editing of a state educational publication, The TAMS (Tennessee Association of Middle Schools) Journal, by two TTU faculty members. A national call for papers regarding middle grades education in rural settings was given. The resulting issue included contributions by seventeen authors including twelve at TTU. Other contributors were from Arizona, Alaska and Virginia. The journal is being distributed to the 600+ membership of TAMS.

A brochure describing the Rural Education Project has been produced and distributed widely. The project director is frequently asked to address various groups about the project and about rural education. A slide presentation has been used for the Phi Delta Kappa and Kappa Delta Pi spring banquets.

4. Facilitate and coordinate [research]/service activities in selected rural schools. A wide variety of service activities has been initiated in the member schools. The Rural Education Project director has worked with school personnel in the

identification of needs and with university faculty in the identification of appropriate service projects which have a research dimension. From this process school needs and faculty interests have been matched effectively. Each project is funded for expenses only with faculty contributing their time and expertise except in those cases where major projects are awarded some faculty released time. From 24 faculty proposals, 21 have been initiated in member schools. In addition to the individual faculty projects the College of Education has authorized the Rural Education Project to sponsor a demonstration project in school music in two of the member schools. With combined funds from Rural Education, Laboratory Experiences and the host school system, a music teacher was employed to teach one day a week in each of two schools. Music education students at TTU observed these classes to meet field experience requirements, lessons were video-taped for use in music methods classes, and the teachers in the school were freed for planning and other professional development activities. Outside funding is being sought to expand this program to one other school and to implement similar programs in art and movement in other schools.

Member school systems are granted priority on requests for inservice assistance and other service needs. Through the research/service projects, the Rural Education Project has been able to trade professional services for access to research data while assisting member schools in achieving their goals.

5. Assist in the implementation of CERA and monitor its impact in selected rural schools. During the first year of the project emphasis was placed on assisting individual teachers and administrators prepare for the Career Ladder Evaluation. A graduate course was offered in Staff Development which went beyond the Tennessee Instructional Model in teaching the research on effective teaching. Teachers who enrolled for the course were video-taped twice and assisted in critiquing their teaching. Each teacher developed a unit plan and one or more lesson plans consistent and were assisted individually in making these plans consistent with the Career Ladder guidelines. Student tuition for the course was provided by the University Foundation.

During the current year, less emphasis has been placed on the Career Ladder evaluations although a course in Improvement of Teaching through Peer Coaching has been provided through a grant from the College of Education Foundation. Several teachers who were applying for the Career Ladder enrolled in the course and found it helpful in preparing for their evaluators. Otherwise, the course emphasized the developing of colleagial relationships among teaching teams, the critiquing of teaching using TIM and other research on effective teaching as a guide, and teacher self-improvement.

The 100 Rural Schools Study described in Goal 2 will provide the basis for monitoring the impact of CERA. The data collection done in 1984-85 will be repeated in 1987-88 to determine changes in those schools over that time. The changes occuring in member

schools will be compared with changes in non-member schools to determine the impact of the Rural Education Project.

6. Provide staff development opportunities for College of Education faculty with an emphasis on research techniques, emerging issues in rural education and teaching/school effectiveness, and direct involvement in the public schools as required by CERA. During 1984-85, three faculty workshops were held with outside consultants. The topics were school-based research design, ethnographic techniques in educational research, and research issues in rural education. During 1985-86, one outside consultant has been used in the area of higher order thinking. Several faculty members have attended professional meetings to learn more about rural education research issues and have shared their experiences through the Rural Scholars meetings. These professional meetings have included the National Rural Education Forum sponsored by the US Office of Education, the national Rural Education Association, the Consortium of Rural Education Project Administrators, and the Southern Rural Education Association.

Numerous materials have been ordered for the Rural Education collection in the University Library and for circulation through the Rural Education Office in Bartoo Hall. In addition to materials specific to rural education, materials ordered include higher order thinking skills, effective teaching, effective schools, research techniques and research reviews.

Faculty involvement in the public schools has been facilitated through supervision of field experiences (See Goal 7), assistance in implementing research/service projects in the schools, and substitute teaching for teachers engaged in professional development activities. Teachers in each member school have the opportunity to request a day away from school to visit another school or attend a professional meeting with their expenses paid. A substitute is provided, preferably by sending a university faculty member to substitute. Seventeen days of university faculty teaching in the public schools has been provided or scheduled.

7. Facilitate field experiences in rural schools for pre- and inservice educators. Rural field experiences include FOED 101 field trips to York Institute and a rural elementary school, music education field experiences in Jackson County, art education practicum experiences during the spring quarter in White County, and student teaching in rural schools. Many of the member schools had never had student teachers prior to the Rural Education Project. During the spring quarter, student teachers were placed in a very small rural school with a teaching principal for the first time.

Weaknesses, Concerns, and/or Problems

The demand for services and the opportunities for research far exceed the financial and faculty resources available. The

College of Education Foundation has provided some funding but the level of University support in marginal. Many other schools wish to join the Consortium, but current resources prohibit the expansion of activities.

Faculty Research/Service Projects

Akenson, James. An Ethnographic Study of a Rural School. Dodsons Branch School.

Bell, LeBron. Child Sexual Abuse Prevention. Selected Schools in the Upper Cumberland.

Brahmstadt, Pat. Impact of Music Enrichment on Cognitive and Affective Learnings of Elementary Students. Gainesboro Elementary, Fox Elementary and East Sparta School.

Christensen, Doran. Two Way Professional Development Program. All Member Schools.

Crain, Sally. Correlation of Art Instruction with Science and Social Studies. Grades K-6, Findlay School.

Davidson, Phyllis and Liz Self. Parent Education. Findlay School and Gainesboro Elementary.

Fletcher, R. K. Computer Data Analysis of School Effectiveness.

Griffin, Sumner. Utilization and Beautification of School Grounds. York Institute.

Peach, Larry and Tom Reddick. Administrative Staff Development and Input into SBE Master Plan.

Phelps, Margaret. Assistance to York Institute Advisory Council in Developing Model Rural School Proposal.

Reddick, Tom and Larry Peach. School Improvement through Program Assessment and Development. White County Middle School.

Roe, Betty. Language Development through Oral Narration. Gainesboro Elementary.

Ross, Elinor. Using Children's Literature to Teach Language Development and Higher Order Thinking. East Sparta, Central View, and Cassville Schools.

Seiter, Carl. Use of Biofeedback to Reduce School Anxiety. White County Middle School.

Talbert, Gene. Academic Team Competition. Fox Elementary.

Willis, Tom and Marion Madison. Follow-up Study of Special Education Teachers in Rural Schools.

Wright, Jill. Comparison of Values of Urban, Suburban and Rural Students.

Wright, Jill. Junior High School Science Program Development.

Wright, Jill and John Myers. Recreational Reading for Secondary Students. Jackson County High School.

Research presentations and publications

Akenson, James. "Rural Education/Rural Social Studies: An Ethnographic Analytical Examination," TAMS Journal, Fall, 1985.

Akenson, James. "What is Unique About Rural Elementary Schools?" Southern Rural Education Association, Louisville, KY, May 9, 1986.

Brahmstedt, Pat. "The Effect of Music on Cognitive and Affective Behavior in Rural Schools," Southeastern Music Education Association, Athens, GA, May 9, 1986.

Christensen, Doran. "Rural Teacher Education," Southern Rural Education Association, Louisville, KY, May 8, 1986.

Christensen, Doran. "A Touch of Freedom/A Touch of Reality," TAMS Journal. Fall, 1985.

Crain, Sally. "Art in Rural Education," TAMS Journal, Fall 1985.

Dayhuff, Barbara. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural Elementary School F-05," M.A. Problem Paper, 1985.

Dringenburg, Cathy. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural Elementary School S-15," M.A. Problem Paper, 1985.

Fletcher, R. K. "A Comparison of Responses of Rural Students with Those of Students Surveyed in the Good Schools Project with Respect to Seven Dimensions of Schooling," MSERA, Biloxi, MS, November 6, 1985.

Foster, Marilee. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural Middle School W-50," M.A. Problem Paper, 1986.

Harrell, Brenda. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural Elementary School J-25," M.A. Problem Paper, 1985.

Howard, Marilyn. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural Elementary School W-30," M.A. Problem Paper, 1985.

Irvine, Paul. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural Middle School J-20," M.A. Problem Paper, 1986.

Lewis, Kathy and Irene Greer. "Improving Rural School Attendance--A Positive Approach," Southern Rural Education Association, Louisville, KY, May 8, 1986.

Mullinix, Lisa. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural Unit School C-15/20," Ed.S. Independent Study, 1986.

Phelps, Margaret. "TTU Rural Education Project," Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Nashville, TN, November 21, 1986

Phelps, Margaret and Gene Talbert. "The Tennessee Tech Rural Education Project," TAMS Journal, Fall 1985.

Rawdon, Judith. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural High School P-65," M.A. Thesis. 1985.

Robinson, Anthony. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural Elementary School P-15," M.A. Problem Paper, 1986.

Seiter, Carl for Margaret Phelps. "A Study of the Effectiveness of a Rural Elementary School in Teaching Basic Skills to Children of Different Socio-Economic Levels and from Families of Different Composition," MSERA, Biloxi, MS, November 6, 1985.

Smith, Jan. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural Middle School D-37." M.A. Problem Paper, 1985.

Swann, Jewel and Gene Talbert. "Team Competition in Seventh Grade Mathematics," TAMS Journal, Fall, 1985.

Talbert, Gene. "A Comparison of Responses of Rural Teachers with Those of Teachers Surveyed in the Good Schools Project with Respect to Nine Dimensions of Schooling," MSERA, Biloxi, MS, November 6, 1985.

Talbert, Gene. "Effective Rural School Research," Southern Rural Education Association, Louisville, KY, May 9, 1986.

Talbert, Gene and Margaret Phelps. "TTU Rural Education Project," Association of Teacher Educators, Atlanta, GA, February 15, 1986.

Wallace, James. "A Study of the Effectiveness of Rural High School J-05," M. A. Problem Paper in Progress.

Wright, Jill and Margaret Phelps. "Improving Rural Schools' Curriculum," Southern Rural Education Association, Louisville, KY, May 8, 1986.

Wright, Jill. "What's Happening in Science in Tennessee's Middle Schools?" TAMS Journal, Fall 1985.

Long Range Plans

1. The project goals have been redefined to emphasize studies of rural school effectiveness, enhancement of teacher effectiveness, school improvement service projects, university faculty development, rural education research and rural school advocacy.

2. Outside funding will be sought for specific aspects of the project.

3. School effectiveness data will be collected in member schools again in 1987-88 for a longitudinal comparison.

4. On-going projects will receive funding priority. New proposals will be sought within the limits of funding.

5. Faculty will be encouraged and assisted in publishing research articles from their studies.